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The Owasippe Staff Association
P.O. Box 7097
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Dear Sirs:

I read with much interest the Summer 1995 issue of OSA Vibrations, and particularly the articles by Ed Black and Jeanne Gunn Rousseau.

Lin Carter sent me Jeanne's article in September 1992, and I enclose a copy of my reply to him. (The Ernie Even mentioned has since passed away.)

Some of my recollections differ somewhat from Ed Black's. The following comments include those and a few extra bits of information, and also should be read in conjunction with my letter of September 30, 1992 to Lin Carter.

1. Walter H. "Pop" Gunn did not direct the Owasippe Scout Camps. He was Camp Director at Dan Beard for a number of years, the last being 1927. I may be mistaken but nor do I recall Al Kirk ever directing the entire Scout reservation. He succeeded "Pop" Gunn as Camp Director of Beard.

2. The number of camps and locations differ somewhat depending on the time span. For the most part we remember Beard, West, McDonald (name changed in 1929 or so to Stuart) and a Family Camp on Crystal Lake; Blackhawk, Checaugau and the Family Camp (248 Club) on Big Blue. Belnap (originally Belknap) was on two small lakes in the Little Blue area. General Headquarters (GHQ) was on the rise above Camp West and consisted of the office building, the warehouse (including the Owasippe, Michigan U.S. Post Office), and the ice house, which stored ice cut from Crystal Lake in the winter by Rue Miller and his crew, packed in sawdust, and used in the Camps all summer.

Camp Belnap came into being sometime in the early or mid 20's when the Scout Executive of the Douglas District (Mason Fields) requested a separate camp for his district, contending it would encourage membership by the Afro-American community. For a year or two (1929-30) it utilized facilities at Hiawatha Beach on Big Blue. (In 1928, a wilderness camp was located on Hiawatha Beach with tree houses for Scouts in a nature study program, adirondacks for the pioneering group, tents for the hiking Scouts and waterfront tents for waterfront activity interests.) Belnap then was moved to the Little Blue area.

3. I remember the Brightwell's but do not recall "postal deliveries" or "fresh meat". When I served as U.S. Postmaster of Owasippe, Michigan in 1929, I drove into Whitehall daily to pick up the Owasippe mail that was dropped off in sacks at the Whitehall post office, and I then delivered the mail to the respective camps after sorting. When I served as Commissary Officer for all camps in 1932, 1933 and 1934, I purchased all fresh meat in the Chicago market as no local slaughterer was certified by the U.S. government. By 1928, or earlier, we had our own trucking fleet of three large trucks and three pick-up trucks, operating out of the GHQ warehouse. I served as Warehouse Director in 1930 and 1931. Brightwell was used when our own trucking facilities needed help, especially to truck campers, bed rolls, suitcases, etc., to and from camps at Big Blue from the docks at Eagle Ottawa Leather Company where the S.S. Carolina disembarked the Scouts, and later from an open field two miles or so southwest of Crystal Lake when transportation was switched (1929) to a chartered Pere Marquette Railroad train. Otherwise, all deliveries (including such heavy ones as coal (for cooking), ice, canoes, etc.) were handled by the Owasippe trucks.

4. Robert Stuart was one of the founders of Quaker Oats Company. I do not believe he ever served as President of the Chicago Council but he may have. His son, R. Douglas Stuart, did and perhaps the current Stuart, Robert D. Stuart, also served as President. The Stuart and Douglas families were extremely active in scouting, nationally and locally (all were Silver Buffalo's). (James H. Douglas was also a co-founder of Quaker Oats. His son, James H. Douglas, Jr., served as President of the Chicago Council.)

5. I recall E. Urner Goodman being at Owasippe a great deal in 1927 but I do not recall his taking control of the daily operations. The Camp Director was (and had been for some years) P. B. Samson, who was Director of Physical Education at Michigan State Teachers College in Ypsilanti, Michigan, during the school year. E. Urner Goodman tried unsuccessfully in 1927 and 1928 to induce Al Nichols to leave the Philadelphia Council and come to Chicago as Camping and Finance Director. Failing in 1928, Hanson W. Hahn, a professional scouter from St. Louis, was hired. Al Nichols was finally persuaded to come for the 1929 season and virtually "cleaned house" at GHQ (it needed it). He also brought in Craig Atkinson, a mathematics instructor at Northwestern University and a former camper at Owasippe, as Business Manager, and V.L. "Roy" Alm, a former Superior National Forest guide and a

Scoutmaster, as Program Director. I could write reams of the changes that were made and improvements instituted. For instance, campsites were dispersed by troop sites and the parade ground set-up was terminated; the red, white and blue wilderness trails were created; transporting of Scouts and gear across Lake Michigan on the S.S. Carolina was switched to a special Pere Marquette train solely used by Owasippe; an inviting stay-over program was instituted to induce more than one period (two weeks) camping; emphasis on camping by city troops; etc. No mention of Owasippe personnel should ever take place without mentioning this trio led by the outstanding Al Nichols.

6. I did know once the origin of the name of Camp Belnap but I do not presently recall. Checaugau is easy. Historically, it was the original spelling of "Chicago." I do not remember it ever serving the Douglas District. It did serve the Northwest District of Chicago from whence came Stan Miller, George Mozealous, Schiller Colberg, George Schnier, etc. Before being on Big Blue Lake (east of Blackhawk) it was located northwest of Chicago. The late Bill Fetridge, prominent for years in local and national scouting, camped there as a boy. His son, Clark Fetridge, continues currently in Scouting on a local, national and international basis.

7. Kopeck, the first caretaker, was a farmer in the Crystal Lake area. He was succeeded by Rue Miller who acted as such for many years in the 20's and 30's. Many of those named by Ed Black went into professional scouting, including, Ernie Schmidt (who then left scouting to serve for many years as the Executive Director of the American Camping Association), Jack Perz, who started as the GHQ waiter in the Beard Mess Hall, Schiller Colberg, who became Scout Executive in the Los Angeles area, George Mozealous as Scout Executive in Denver, etc.

8. The 248 Club (family camp on Big Blue) was not a log building but a large two-story, wooden frame building. The second floor consisted of an open balcony completely around the inside of the building and sleeping rooms which opened off of the balcony.

9. When I was a Scout, and for many years before and after, Owasippe ran five two-week periods. Scouts arrived (from ship or later from trains) early Monday evening in time for the evening meal and left twelve days later on Saturday morning, arriving in Chicago late that afternoon. The stayover period (with no charge) ran that Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The camp

charge was $10 for a period plus $1 each way on the S.S. Carolina. The train fare was $3 round trip. In the early years, each period had an added attraction such as a Scout circus, a treasure hunt, red and white war, etc. Many Scouts selected periods for the particular special events.

10. Each year a Spring camp was held for one week during the May school break. It was geared to work and no fee was charged. Two hundred or so Scouts participated each year. It was during these times that many of the second growth timbers were planted, fire breaks built, roads repaired, etc. The Spring camp centered around Beard. A Winter camp was also held during the Christmas school break. It was centered on Big Blue Lake at Checaugau, and featured skiing, ice boating, hiking on snowshoes, ice skating, etc.

11. For many years (1926-1934) I wrote a Scouting article weekly on Saturday for the Chicago Daily News. During the summer months the emphasis was on Owasippe. Once a summer, I wrote a full page article about Owasippe for the Muskegon Chronicle. The articles carried my personal name by-line or "By Eagle Scout". My picture often accompanied the articles. They have all been deposited in the Owasippe Museum.

12. I am proud to say I have been continuously registered in Scouting since December 1922. In 1926, I was fortunate to receive my Eagle Badge from Lord Baden Powell when he visited Chicago. I am also proud to say I have served as Council President, Honorary Council President, Chairman of Region 7, and on the National Board and Advisory Council. I have been honored to receive the Silver Beaver, Silver Antelope, Silver Buffalo, Distinguished Eagle Scout Award, Mortimer Schiff award, and the Vigil Honor of the Order of the Arrow. Please don't misunderstand. I mention these facts solely to emphasize with pride my Scouting background which has played such a major part in my life.

Very truly yours,

Milton H. Gray

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